



# AETC News Clips

## Randolph AFB, Texas



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Houston Chronicle  
April 5, 2006

## New Tasks For Air Force

### *Airmen at Texas camp train for ground action*

By John W. Gonzalez and Michael Hedges

CAMP BULLIS - A roadside bomb detonated and small-arms fire crackled in the brush, pinning down a U.S. military convoy whose gunners leapt out of their vehicles into defensive positions as medics prepared the wounded for evacuation.

Drills simulating attacks by Iraqi insurgents have been done countless times on U.S. Army installations, but the one executed earlier this week was unusual because the trainees were all members of the Air Force.

At the request of the Army, whose troops and resources have been severely stretched in Iraq, the Air Force is now providing special training to some airmen to help with risky ground combat duties.

And starting in the fall of 2007, all recruits will get an extra two weeks of basic training - 8 1/2 weeks in all - as a transforming Air Force takes on new tasks amid evolving enemy threats.

The Air Force's basic mission continues to revolve around air support.

That includes air cargo runs that increasingly reduce the number of trucks needed to supply troops in Iraq; close air support for ground troops; and running the unmanned Predator drones used to hunt and kill insurgents, said Air Force spokeswoman Jean Schaefer at the Pentagon.

The Air Force has 21,000 airmen and women in the Central Command zone, which includes Iraq, Afghanistan and also places like Kuwait and Qatar where the U.S. has bases, Schaefer said.

Although Air Force personnel levels in Iraq have been steady in recent months, the service continues to take on roles previously assigned to the Army, Schaefer said.

"We have picked up some missions from the Army since the beginning of operations in Iraq, including some ground convoy duties, guarding detainees and interrogating prisoners," Schaefer said.

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The Air Force also operates a large hospital in Balad and conducts security operations and explosive ordnance disposal, she said.

### **Houston sergeant killed**

In a week in late March, Schaefer said, Air Force personnel conducted 506 combat air missions, 146 reconnaissance flights, 1,114 airlifts and 249 air refuelings.

The conflict claimed the life of an airman from Houston, Tech Sgt. Walter Mark Moss Jr., a specialist in the detection and removal of explosive devices who was killed March 30 by a makeshift bomb.

Moss, 37, a graduate of Aldine High School and a veteran of Operation Desert Storm, had been in Iraq since mid-January.

Officials hope to limit casualties with additional training for all airmen.

Gen. William R. Looney III, commander of the Air Force Air Education Training Command, announced the revised basic training regimen in February, saying it will "produce more lethal and adaptable airmen."

Already added to the basic curriculum, which has run about six weeks since the Vietnam era, were M-16A2 weapons training and more ground combat tactics.

Since late 2004, when the Army asked for Air Force help, airmen headed to convoy duty also have been required to complete 30 days of drills at this Army installation northwest of San Antonio, where Iraqi hostilities and life on a small U.S. base there are painstakingly replicated.

### **'Now we are up front'**

This week, 175 airmen from Lackland AFB are in their final days of training before they go to Fort Sill, Okla., for pre-deployment certification.

Then it's off to the war zone for final validation before entering Iraq as a team.

The Air Force began prepping transportation, medical and security specialists for convoy duty in late 2004 after the Army asked for help.

Nearly 1,700 airmen have received the training before being deployed to Iraq in teams of 175.

"We used to be in the rear with the gear, but now we are up front," said Master Sgt. Martin Lund, a combat veteran who trains airmen to survive road duty in Iraq.

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Even after completing the "Basic Combat Convoy Course," four airmen have been killed and at least 40 wounded on convoy duty in Iraq, Lund said.

"Battlefield focus is the big key. We need to make sure these guys are focused before they get into theater," Lund said.

Working on six-month tours of duty, those who completed training have conducted 8,000 missions and endured 6,000 engagements with the enemy, resulting in awards of a Silver Star, 180 Bronze Stars and 100 Purple Hearts, Lund said.

### **Preparing for insurgents**

About 80 instructors, many with combat experience, work with the trainees, some playing roles as insurgents who use the latest tactics to assault U.S. convoys that move fuel, water and other supplies from Kuwait to Iraq.

And while the training is meant to keep the airmen constantly on guard, threats can be sporadic.

"They can go a month without getting touched, and then they can get hit three times in one week," Lund said.

Airmen, who usually serve one or two weeks at a time on convoy duty, have, for the most part, accepted the new chores.

"You have some that say, 'Hey, I didn't join the Army,'" Lund said.

"I'd say 80 to 85 percent are behind it now. It's what we do."

Yet, when she signed up for the Air Force 10 years ago, Staff Sgt. Laurieann Borger said there was no convoy combat training.

Now, after surviving real attacks with roadside bombs and small-arms fire, she helps prepare others for the dangers.

"I had no idea I'd be doing this," Borger said.

A driver who was among the first trainees to deploy in 2004, Borger said that teamwork is crucial.

"If they don't come together as one, they're never going to make it through," she said.

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With training, she said, "every time you're on the road, everything you learned just comes to you automatic, so you just react."

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### **Repeat of '05 called unlikely**

#### **Lesser, but strong, storms forecast**

By KEN KAYE

KNIGHT RIDDER NEWS SERVICE

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. - The 2005 hurricane season was so chaotic that it's unlikely the United States will suffer a similar one for several years, storm forecaster William Gray said Tuesday.

And "it is statistically unlikely" four major hurricanes will hit the coastline in upcoming seasons, as Dennis, Katrina, Rita and Wilma did last year, said Gray, a Colorado State University professor.

In an updated forecast for the 2006 season, he continues to project 17 named storms, with nine hurricanes, five intense. That would be considerably more active than the average season of 10 named storms, with six hurricanes, two intense.

Yet it would be significantly slower than the 27 named storms with 15 hurricanes that made 2005 the busiest and most destructive season on record.

Gray still projects an 81 percent chance a major hurricane will slam the U.S. coastline, while the long-term average is 52 percent.

He predicts a 64 percent chance that a major hurricane will strike the East Coast, including the Florida peninsula, while the long-term average is 31 percent.

He forecasts a 47 percent chance a major hurricane will hit the Gulf Coast, between the Florida Panhandle and Brownsville, Texas, while the long-term average is 30 percent.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration will release its seasonal outlook on May 22. Hurricane season starts June 1 and runs through Nov. 30.

Both Gray and NOAA scientists say the Atlantic basin has entered an era of hurricane intensity that could last 10 to 20 years because of a natural cycle, as warmer water shifts to the region where storms form and grow.

Also contributing to the "recipe" for an active 2006: La Nina, a cooling condition of the Eastern Pacific Ocean. Although it should be weak, it still could act to promote hurricane formation, Gray said.

No matter how active the hurricane season is, most U.S. coastal areas will not see a tropical storm, said Phil Klotzbach, a member of Gray's research team, who co-authored the latest forecast.

"The probability of landfall for any one location along the coast is very low," he said. "However, low landfall probability does not ensure that hurricanes will not come ashore, so coastal residents should always be prepared."

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### **AROUND SOUTH MISSISSIPPI**

#### **KEESLER AFB**

##### **Keesler Pharmacy able to fill prescriptions faster**

Off-base prescriptions will take only a day to fill at the Keesler Pharmacy, according to a press release from the base.

The pharmacy began accepting prescriptions from off-base civilian providers Jan. 23. They were added into the pharmacy computer system, transmitted to Lackland AFB, Texas, and filled there, then delivered to Keesler for pickup at the Biloxi VA -- a turnaround time of about four business days.

The pharmacy recently acquired more space to allow it to stock a greater quantity and variety of medications needed to fill off-base prescriptions locally. As a result, off-base prescriptions are now filled by a night shift in the pharmacy and delivered for pick-up at the VA site after noon the next duty day. However, refills continue to be processed at Lackland for pick-up at the VA site four duty-days later.

Service hours for processing off-base prescriptions are 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday in Room 1D-103 of the medical center.



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### **Lessons of Katrina**

'It was like going into combat with your families,' former Keesler chief says

By [Bruce Rolfson](#)  
*Times staff writer*

With this year's hurricane season, beginning June 1, the commander who saw Keesler Air Force Base, Miss., through Hurricane Katrina is offering his lessons learned.

"It was like going into combat with your families," recalled Maj. Gen. William Lord, who was commander of Keesler's 81st Training Wing.

An airman working command post duties at Keesler during the storm could walk out of the post and find his wife sitting near the door and knitting.

About 6,000 of the base's 16,000 staff and students rode out the storm at Keesler, Lord recalled. All who stayed at Keesler survived, thanks to buildings designed to withstand winds of 150 to 175 mph.

Lord credited the base's twice-annual hurricane drills as one reason the base was able to shelter everyone.

People who wanted to leave before Katrina made landfall, on Aug. 29, were given an evacuation notice 12 hours before local civilian authorities issued their notices, Lord said.

The base also benefited from decisions made by past commanders, Lord said. For example, after an earlier hurricane damaged the base's above-ground electrical system, the Air Force paid to bury the power cables. That enabled Keesler to restore regular electrical service to its buildings while neighboring civilian communities remained dark.

Nonetheless, the Air Force estimates the repair bill for Keesler at \$950 million. That includes damage to the base's vulnerable hangars, base housing and retail stores. It



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doesn't include the money paid to airmen and family members as per diems while they were evacuated, or pending property-damage claims.

Today, the number of students at Keesler has returned to pre-Katrina levels, according to the Air Force. As of mid-March, about 3,400 students were enrolled, most in initial training courses. The students are living in Keesler's dormitories, which were relatively unharmed by the storm.

Keesler is the Air Force's training center for several career fields, including air traffic control, communications, personnel and electronics repairs.

The return of a full schedule of advanced classes, such as 7-level courses, will have to wait for the housing situation to improve. With limited hotel space available and base housing packed, there are few places for airmen on short visits to stay.

Some repairs at Keesler will take more time.

Keesler Medical Center, the Air Force's second-largest hospital, is still undergoing repairs.

The hospital's basement and first floor were flooded, damaging the building's electrical power generators and expensive medical gear housed on the first floor.

To protect itself from future floods from bayside, the base may construct a levee, Lord said. That change would keep water away from residences.

The base housing area is also seeing extensive changes.

The base is aiming to have 865 homes repaired by Aug. 1. Another 1,067 new homes should be built by late 2008.

Today, Lord, a career communications officer, is assigned to Air Force headquarters at the Pentagon as director of information, services and integration for the chief information officer.





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When not at the Pentagon, Lord teaches a two-hour course at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., to new wing commanders about dealing with natural disasters.

[Bruce Rolfsen](#) covers training issues. He can be reached at (703) 750-8647 or [brolfse@airforcetimes.com](mailto:brolfse@airforcetimes.com).



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### Letters

#### Don't forget the little people

Several months ago, a shelter commander during Hurricane Katrina published his memoirs recounting this horrifying experience. I would like to provide some clarity on this issue.

Each shelter at Keesler Air Force Base, Miss., was assigned a shelter management team. This team is responsible for setup, preparation and operation of the emergency shelter in the event of a hurricane making landfall near the base. In the months leading to the 2005 hurricane season, this team put an extraordinary amount of effort and countless hours into rebuilding this shelter management program.

During Hurricane Katrina, this commander's team was responsible for 90 percent of the work in operation and maintenance for the seven days we spent in the shelter. Having read his memoirs, not once does he mention his shelter management team nor does he give an ounce of credit to the work they put into this program. Their efforts have gone unrecognized in this commander's shadow.

Without them, none of this would have been possible. They are the true behind-the-scenes heroes of this story.

**Former Capt. Ben Glon**

Alexandria, Va.